

Primary audience research under study again

By BERNICE KANNER

NEW YORK—The hard-core reader may come back in vogue in magazine research circles in the coming decade.

At least, that's the hope of Starch INRA Hooper, the Mamaroneck, N.Y.-based researcher which just completed a pilot primary audience survey. The company expects to put a new, enlarged study in the field this fall—and every fall thereafter.

But whether 50 publishers will ante up the funds needed to back primary audience research (the tab should run upwards of \$50,000 per publisher) is uncertain, and largely dependent on agency receptivity to the new data.

■ There are reasons why agencies and advertisers should be receptive, according to Jay Wilson, SHH president. The new study confirmed that those who pay for a magazine are many more times likely to respond to ads than pass-along readers who are included in total audience figures. Paying customers are better ad prospects be-

cause they are more quickly reached than pass-along readers. They also spend more time with the magazine and have more money to spend.

Such reasoning has convinced Mal Ochs, research director for Time marketing, and Rene Isaac, vp-corporate research director, *Reader's Digest*. Their books were among a dozen to sponsor the initial research on 19 magazines, data of which they are evaluating before supporting future projects (AA, Feb. 12).

But while Messrs. Ochs and Isaac lean toward advocating primary audience research, research directors from other publications are sitting on the fence.

"We sell total audience," said Nicholas Bakos, research director, *McCall's*, one of the magazines surveyed which did not help foot the bill. "Agencies traditionally have been interested in total audience. Before we plunk down the money, we want to see that this is accepted."

The difficulties of making this data "count," as well as the inadequacies of the current study, kept

Woman's Day from kicking in a contribution, although it was surveyed. "This would be a good story for us, but it would be difficult to sell," said Chris Winnicki, research director. "There's a large out-of-pocket expense, and we didn't want to go through the whole groundwork of educating people."

Ms. Winnicki also was dismayed at the limitations of the survey. "We didn't think it extended much beyond a head count. It didn't cover enough. We were interested in a reader quality study."

■ While others seem to hedge their rejections, *Newsweek* media research manager Stephen Douglas opposes primary audience research on principle.

"Our opinion, and it seems to be the opinion of the Advertising Research Foundation, is that the primary audience is almost impossible to measure accurately for large circulation, high reader-per-copy magazines readily available in public places," Mr. Douglas said. He claimed that most of the study's underwriters were large circulation magazines with low numbers of

readers per copy.

"This data is very limited," Mr. Douglas continued. "Its one franchise is determining which women's or dual audience magazine produces the greatest coupon responsiveness. Total audience will remain the major base of data from which to evaluate magazines and other media, and primary will find limited acceptance in the agencies."

At least one agency exec is optimistic about primary audience data. "This represents an important movement, particularly with what's going on in marketing research today," said Herbert Maneloveg, who is leaving Kenyon & Eckhardt to become senior vp-director of media, programming and media services at Della Femina, Travisano & Partners (AA, July 2).

■ Primary research was scrapped years ago in lieu of total audience so magazines could have big numbers to fight tv, Mr. Maneloveg said. But now, with the government more involved in advertising and ads more technical and comparative "it's important not just to count all pass-along readers. Primary in this environment is a good thing and other agencies damn well should be interested in it," he said. Some shops are not interested, however. "That's because they're comfortable with the way things are," Mr. Maneloveg added.

But the agency consensus seems best expressed by Jack D. Hill, vp-media information services, Ogilvy

& Mather. "We subscribed because we think there's a need for primary audience research. We expect it to supplement rather than replace total audience numbers," the exec said.

Some publishers may be loath to sign on "because they don't want to be evaluated on the basis of primary," he continued. "Others are pulled three ways, what with W. R. Simmons & Associates, Magazine Research Inc. and now Starch. It can get expensive."

■ Mr. Hill noted that the economy could hamstring primary research's takeoff. "We haven't made plans to cut anything, but we could," he said.

"The onus is on the agencies," Mr. Hill added. "We have to make the first move. Agencies have to use it, then magazines will fall in." #